



CITY OF CLEVELAND

## Office of the Council

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**Michael D. Polensek** COUNCIL MEMBER, WARD 8

**COMMITTEES:** Safety - Vice Chair • Utilities • Rules

February 27, 2019

The Honorable Kevin Kelley  
President, Cleveland City Council  
601 Lakeside Avenue, Room 220  
Cleveland, Ohio 44113

Dear Council President:

I have enjoyed these last two weeks of the budget hearings, as I always do. This was my 42 time I have had the privilege to attend the budget hearings. Over the years, I have always learned something new or get to understand the revenue and expense picture more clearly.

That being said, I believe that there should have been an informal sit-down reconciliation process or caucus scheduled as a part of the overall budget discussion. That is how we did it in the past; where those members who were interested had the opportunity to express to their colleagues their concerns, suggestions and possible amendments. To have no open dialogue among the members over a \$1.8 billion budget, quite frankly, does a disservice to all of us, especially your leadership team.

Since that did not happen and you are planning to have the Second Reading of the General Fund Budget on Monday, March 4, I am submitting the following recommendations and amendments to the budget with the hope that I will see amendments and changes with the focus on neighborhood services.

I don't need to remind anyone, that this council is under attack by outside forces alleging that the Body has been ineffective in dealing with a whole host of issues, primarily around city services or the delivery of said services. Our residents are paying more than ever before for income tax, water and sewer as well as property taxes, in many cases. With the passage of Issue 32 they expected to see some concerted effort to address these growing concerns; yet, councilmembers are besieged daily with "quality of life" issues.

Let me state officially that in these past 42 years I have never witnessed a carry-over CASH BALANCE of **\$43.3 million** on top of a RAINY DAY FUND of **\$31.9 million** (for a grand total of **\$75.2 million**). At the same time basic city services are either unchanged, mediocre or, quite frankly, poor.

I am honored to be a part of this Legislative Body and I am thankful each day I am able to walk into City Hall for the support and confidence which my citizens have given me, and that is why I fight so hard on their behalf for fair and decent services.

Therefore, the citizens are looking to City Council to level the playing field on their behalf. As a result of my own review of the budget, listening to the Administration at the Table, and dialoguing with my colleagues, I am making my recommendations public to you, your Leadership Team and my colleagues.

**Per your request following the 2019 Budget Hearing, I offer the following amendments and recommendations as a part of the Reconciliation process to be included for Second Reading of this year's budget on Monday, March 4, 2019:**

- 1) ***Under "The House of Corrections"*** (page 282) the Administration calls for a Budget of **\$8,468,803**. As you are aware, we are no longer in the jail business. We still pay \$99 per prisoner per day. On an average day there is an estimate of 127 prisoners. Under the most extreme potential incarceration number there is still a **\$4.0 million** overestimation of expenses for this Division. That is **\$4 million** which could be redirected for other programs and services. I could point out other Departments and Divisions where, I believe, revenue could be redirected. However, the House of Corrections is the most glaring.
- 2) I am recommending that out of the **\$43 million carry-over** that the following funds be redirected to the following services:
  - a. **\$750,000** be directed to Parks Maintenance so that a stand-alone grass cutting/ clean-up crew could be placed in each of the 17 wards. The Administration, as you are aware, were proposing that Councilmembers fund this out of their ward allocations. This is totally unnecessary and uncalled especially in light of the budget surplus.

- b. **\$1.0 million** be earmarked to the Department of B&H for additional Demolition throughout the City.
- c. **\$500,000** be directed to Public Works, specifically to Urban Forestry, to be used for additional outside tree trimming contracts. To wait twenty-three (23) years, on average, to get a tree trimmed in the city, is outrageous. A *woodpecker* works faster. If the Administration can hire internally to ramp up tree trimming then I am fine with doing that in-house.
- d. **\$14.4 million** is allocated for residential street resurfacing according to Sharon Dumas. I am proposing that an addition **\$2.6 million** be earmarked on top of that for a grand total of **\$17.0 Million - and to designate \$1.0 million, *equally per ward***, for residential street resurfacing.
- e. That **\$1.7 million** be earmarked for the Senior Citizen Housing Assistance program for all 17 Wards, which would guarantee at least **\$100,000** per ward for this program. That being said, even a **\$100,000** is inadequate in light of the demand we have all experienced in this area.

In addition, I would also like to recommend the following as well:

- 1) ***Under "Highland Golf Course"*** (page 437-438): In 2019 it is time to put aside all the bogus claims and inaccuracies as to why the City should continue to operate this golf course. Race has been injected into this discussion for far too long and quite frankly, this is embarrassing and uncalled for. We turned Seneca Golf Course over to MetroParks, and they have done a great job in turning this one magnificent course back to life. I am not suggesting that we eliminate the Highland line item from this budget; however, we need to send a clear message to the Administration that we should be in discussions with the MetroParks for them to take over management of the golf course beginning next year. If we need to provide seed money to bring about that integration over the next two years, then we need to do just that, just as the State provided money to MetroParks to take over our Lakefront parks. It worked. Primarily, east side golfers have been denied a quality golf course for far too long with race being used as a crutch to maintain a sub-par, unmaintained golf course for them to play on. It is time to

grow up and do what is right for our citizen golfers. They deserve a first class golf course and only MetroParks, in my opinion, can provide that. For anyone to play the race card with MetroParks, is obscene in light of their record and what they have accomplished throughout the County.

- 2) ***Red Brick Street Program.*** As you know we have talked about this ad naseum with the Administration, specifically with the Utilities Leadership. They keep stonewalling us on this initiative. We need to know what it would cost to implement and maintain a red brick street restoration program with one crew working the West side and the other on the East side to address utility cuts in red brick streets and other maintenance issues. Councilmembers Brady, Zone, Kazy, McCormack, myself and others brought this up last year and once again this year. I want to make it clear to all, at one time we had a red brick street restoration program in the city and it worked well to maintain the viability and character of these historic roadways. With the Division of Water having **\$194 million** carry-over balance, and yet, to continue to deny improvements to citizens who live on red brick streets, is insulting. Furthermore, the Division of Street should be operating a crew, east and west, as well. For they could also address deficiencies in concrete roadways.
- 3) ***Sidewalk replacement program.*** Mr. President, as you are aware, the Administration set forth a policy where damaged tree-lifted sidewalks and others throughout the city would only be replaced on the street undergoing resurfacing. So, since over half the Body has been denied a fair share of resurfacing funds, they are also severely being short changed on sidewalk repair. Furthermore, if you live on a concrete or red brick street, you will NEVER see the sidewalk program. Yet, those citizens are paying taxes like anyone else.

Kevin, had all of us been told that this disparity would continue after the passage of Issue 32, with regard to resurfacing and sidewalk replacement, I never would never have supported Issue 32 nor would have my residents. Talk about bait-and-switch. This has to be corrected.

- 4) **Police and Fire.** It goes without saying where I stand on this issue. We do not have enough Police working our streets and one could argue that the same holds true with Fire. The Charter is clear, we cannot administer; however, if we do not stay on top of public safety with regard to staffing levels throughout the remainder of this year and into 2020, we will be confronted, once again, with more individuals leaving through attrition and retirement than the Administration will be bringing on. Chief Williams publicly called for **1,700** officers in the Division of Police. At the Budget Table the Chief stated that, at present, there were approximately **1,639** sworn officers in the Division of Police. Yet, we lose about **100** every year. If the Administration, does not put on a significant number of classes for Police next year, we will never reach and/or maintain that proposed number. Which I personally believe is still too low anyway.

Finally, there is not a one of us in this Body, or speaking on behalf of our Citizens, who would not like to have a cash balance in their savings. That goes without saying. However, government is not free. Outside of the Enterprise Accounts, who operate off of fees and charges for service, the General Fund's whole purpose for existence is to provide for daily operation of city government, specifically for providing services to our citizens.

Unfortunately, today at City Hall there is denial as to not only the level of services but the quality of them. What I proposed is not earth shattering nor will it negatively impede in any way the general fund or the Enterprise accounts. What I am recommending is that you and your Leadership Team understand that Council members need more help and more resources in addressing the daily concerns that are directed to their offices on a daily basis.

**What I am proposing in amendments totals \$6.55 million to the General Fund from the Cash carry-over or the Rainy Day fund. If you deduct the \$4 million over-estimation in the House of Corrections, then we are only talking an additional \$2.5 million. Kevin, the Mayor's Estimate of the General Fund Budget is \$646 million for Pete's Sake.**

In the day, I can assure you that we moved far more money to address concerns of council than what I am proposing here. Time will tell this year where, not only the Administration stands on services, but where this Legislative Body does as well.

I end with this, if residents and our voters don't believe that Council is working on their behalf, specifically as it pertains to the delivery of services, they why do they need seventeen (17) members. In reality, they don't. Continue to ignore the obvious, the concerns and complaints of our citizens, and watch what happens.

One last thought, I make the recommendation that the budget hearings be scheduled for next year beginning a week earlier so as to allow more time for members to absorb and reply to reconciliation concerns and requests before having to vote on this multi-billion dollar budget without the opportunity for discussion.

I look forward to discussing this, if possible. If you have any comments or further questions, please feel free to contact me at my office. I may be reached at (216) 664-4236 or by email at [mpolensek@clevelandcitycouncil.org](mailto:mpolensek@clevelandcitycouncil.org).

Sincerely,

*Michael D. Polensek*

Michael D. Polensek  
Councilman, Ward 8

CC: Honorable Members of Cleveland City Council